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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 001077

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DEPT FOR M/FO JOHN MCINTYRE; WHA/CCA BISA WILLIAMS; WHA/FO
KIRSTEN MADISON; WHA/EX JIM ROBERTSON; DS/OFM/TC CLIFF
SEAGRAVES; L/FO PAUL DEAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: HAVANA POUCH STRATEGY

REF: HAVANA 1041 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: COM MICHAEL E. PARMLY FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D

- ¶1. (C) Summary: The Government of Cuba (GOC) continues to reject bags from USINT unclassified diplomatic pouch deliveries, though a pattern of objectionable items is not discernable. USINT will implement a strategy with U.S. Despatch Agency Miami to identify types of materials being rejected. End summary.
- ¶2. (C) From October 24th to November 13th USINT received six unclassified diplomatic pouch deliveries containing a total

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of 148 bags. Of these, 108 bags have been released to USINT and 40 bags have been rejected for being in violation of the Vienna Convention (VC). On November 15th, 77 bags arrived that have not been processed by the GOC.

¶3. (C) The Ministry of Exterior Relations (Minrex) since October 24th has requested four meetings at the airport with USINT officials to discuss bag contents. We have attended three, including one on November 14th at which three bags were rejected (part of the 40). At each meeting the Minrex message has been vague but unwavering - the unacceptable pouches contain materials intended to subvert the internal order of Cuba, or contain personal mail for USINT diplomats, which are not covered by the VC.

¶4. (C) To hone in on what, in fact, may be the objectionable items (understanding that the Cubans may be purposefully pulling bags on a random basis), we will ship the 40 rejected pouches (and any rejected in the future) back to U.S. Despatch Agency Miami to be unpacked and sorted into three categories: public diplomacy (PD) outreach materials, official USINT procurements, and personal mail for diplomats. These will then be re-packed into pouch bags with similar items only (PD items only in a bag, personal mail only in a bag, etc.) and resent to USINT, interspersed in other pouch shipments. Each individual item will be marked with a symbol so that when they are received by USINT (or returned to Miami) they are easily identified as "re-sends" and we can begin to identify a pattern of what is being rejected. U.S. Despatch Agency Miami has been informed by CCA of this strategy and is in agreement.

¶5. (C) Comment: Since mid-September the GOC has objected to and held back one or more bags from every unclassified pouch delivery and has sent USINT multiple diplomatic notes that contain identical text reiterating that the deliveries are in violation of the Vienna Convention. With no evidence to date that they are targeting specific items, we believe they are slowly, methodically creating the groundwork for possible further actions. End comment.

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